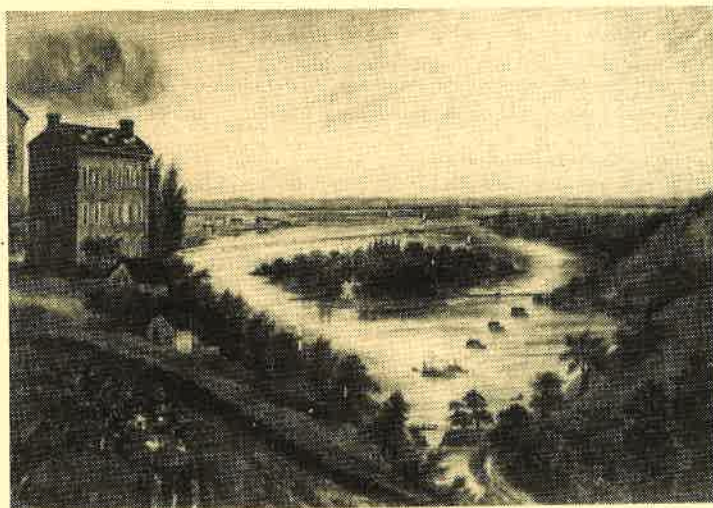


Making Washington City

Proprietors, Dreamers, Builders



The Historical Society of Washington, D. C.
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Margaret N. Burri, Curator of Collections, HSWDC
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Chester Design Associates, Inc.

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Kenneth R. Bowling	Janet West Garrett	The Kiplinger Washington Collection
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April 18, 1991 through December, 1991

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Front cover: The Potomac, Analostan Island, and Georgetown College, watercolor, Caroline Nourse, c. 1810.

Back cover: Prospect of Georgetown from the Tenleytown Road, watercolor, Caroline Nourse, c. 1810

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Historical Society of Washington, D. C.'s bicentennial exhibition, "Making Washington City: Proprietors, Dreamers, Builders," celebrates the 200th anniversary of the founding of the nation's capital. This tribute to the builders of this magnificent city is a fitting inaugural for the Eleanor Medill ("Cissy") Patterson Gallery, the first exhibition space totally devoted to changing exhibitions on Washington, D. C. history. The Cissy Patterson Trust generously provided a major grant for the design and construction of this new gallery enabling HSW to bring to public view many of the treasures in its collections as well as important items from private collections and other repositories.

The D. C. Community Humanities Council awarded a generous grant for development of the exhibition itself with additional assistance from The Hechinger Foundation. We are also very grateful to the people and institutions whose loaned items contribute so much to this exhibition.

Many contributed to this first exhibition. HSW Board members, Niente Smith, Chairman of the Society's exhibition committee, and Douglas Sprunt, exhibition committee member, gave countless hours to locate important items from private collections. Their enthusiasm, and good sense spearheaded the Society's efforts to create a truly professional exhibition space. Candace Shireman, HSW's Site Administrator, supervised much of the actual construction of the Patterson Gallery.

Three talented curators-- Margaret N. Burri, HSW's Curator of Collections, and Guest Curators, Melinda Young Frye and Keith Melder, historians and experts in the field of exhibition development-- selected the objects shown, researched and wrote the interpretive text. Patricia Chester, principal of Chester Design Associates, assisted by Douglas Fisher, designed the gallery and installed this exhibition. Prominent local historian, Kathryn Schneider Smith, President of The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., contributed immensely as a reviewer of exhibition themes and text. Dr. Kenneth Bowling, a recognized scholar of this early period, also contributed immensely as a reviewer of historical content.

We welcome you and hope you will return often to future exhibitions.

Jane W. North, Executive Director
The Historical Society of Washington, D. C.

INTRODUCTION

In 1790, the Residence Act of Congress settled a long debate and placed the new federal capital on the Potomac River. George Washington, designated to define the exact site, chose the confluence of the Potomac River and the Eastern Branch (Anacostia) in January, 1791. As authorized, Washington appointed three commissioners to administer the jurisdiction: Thomas Johnson and Daniel Carroll, of Maryland; and David Stuart, of Virginia. In quick succession, Andrew Ellicott and Benjamin Banneker arrived to lay out the 10-mile-square area, and Pierre L'Enfant began to design a new city within it. The city stretched from Georgetown to the Anacostia River and north to present-day Florida Avenue which the city commissioners named Washington City. For the next twenty-five years, proprietors, artisans, and laborers collaborated to lay the foundations of a great city and grand national capital.

The proprietors or landowners in the future federal city, numbering about twenty, owned roughly thirty distinct tracts of land in 1791. They were a mixed group. Some belonged to old Maryland families settled in Prince George's County for a century or more. Others were newcomers attracted by potential financial prospects. Many proprietors cultivated their lands with tobacco, corn, wheat and orchard crops. Faith in the city's future encouraged a brisk real estate trade among old families and recently arrived speculators alike.

The City of Washington in 1792, topographical map, Don A. Hawkins, cartographer, 1991. Photoreproduction.

The Potomac Valley landscape known and used by the original Native American occupants was a rich riverine environment. Today much has been changed by intensive development. This map, newly created, represents extensive research among historic resources.

Milling stone with pestle, projectile points, and club head, typical of those made by local Native Americans between about 7000 BC and AD 500.

Loan, Joan F. Marsh and others.

By the late 1600s, when the first white settlers came to the Potomac Valley, Native American peoples had lived in the area for more than 10,000 years. The makers of these objects were the ancestors of the Piscataway, Natotchtank, Patuxent and other historic groups of the region.

"The manner of making their boats," engraved by Theodor de Bry, 1590, after the watercolor by John White.

Photoreproduction.

Stone drills, knife scraper, hafted ax, fragments of pottery, and shell beads, characteristic of those made between 1000 BC and AD 1650.

Loan, private collection.

Ancient hunters, gatherers, fishers, farmers, and traders made artifacts such as these during the immense span of time they occupied this region prior to the coming of the Europeans.

Washington as Seen from Georgetown Heights, by George Jacob Beck, c. 1800, gouache on paper, mounted in original frame (reverse-painted on glass).

Loan, private collection.

George Beck, an Englishman active in America after 1795, recorded this view of the slowly developing city. Commenting on the site in 1789, Pierre L'Enfant wrote: "No nation, perhaps, had ever before the opportunity offered them of deliberately deciding on the spot where their Capitol city should be fixed... it will be obvious that the plan should be drawn on such a scale as to leave room for that aggrandizement and embellishment which the increase of wealth of the nation will permit it to pursue at any period however remote...."

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The Potomac, Analostan Island and Georgetown College, and Prospect of Georgetown from the Tenleytown Road by Caroline Nourse, c. 1810, watercolor.

Loan, Captain and Mrs. Bladen Dulany Claggett, family descendants of the artist.

These views, painted by local artist Caroline Nourse, capture the pastoral quality of everyday life in the agricultural community and reflect domestic architecture and modes of travel in what was becoming the federal city. The road to Tenleytown and Frederick began as an Indian trail, served later as a tobacco rolling road, and is today Wisconsin Avenue. This view was President Adams' first glimpse of the nation's capital.

Early Recollections of Washington City,
Christian Hines, 1866.

The Historical Society of Washington, D. C. [HSWDC]

The Joseph Nourse mentioned in this passage is the grandfather of the artist.

A map of Maryland and Virginia, sold by Thomas Baffet in Fleet Street [London]..., 1676,
engraving. HSWDC

The future site of the federal city was located at the fall line (the highest navigable point) on the Potomac River between Maryland and Virginia. Land in the region had been home to various Native American peoples (as noted at the lower right). By the mid-seventeenth century, it was held largely by English investors. One hundred years later, the two states agreed to cede to the federal government jurisdiction over land for a new one-hundred-square-mile capital city. George Washington decided on the exact location, directly between, and including, the existing successful port towns of Georgetown and Alexandria.

PROPRIETORS

A Capital Fit for an Empire

The capital's founders dreamed of a new city, planned from the ground up, a capital suited to a great republic. The design prepared by L'Enfant surpassed their dreams. Covering several thousand acres, the L'Enfant plan included sites for the major public buildings, connected by broad avenues, interspersed with public parks and plazas. L'Enfant placed the different branches of government--legislative, executive, and judiciary--at separate locations in the plan, giving physical expression to the constitutional balance of powers. He provided the nation with a capital fit for an empire.

Plan of the City of Washington, In the Territory of Columbia..., drawn by surveyor Andrew Ellicott, after the plan of Pierre L'Enfant. Engraved and printed by Samuel Hill, Boston, 1792. HSWDC

Pierre L'Enfant was retained in 1791 by George Washington to design the new city. Although he sketched a brilliant plan for the capital city, L'Enfant resisted drawing up a formal map showing his scheme. The absence of a detailed block map of the city-to-be interfered with efforts to sell lots and raise needed funds. It contributed to L'Enfant's dismissal. Andrew Ellicott, who was already at work surveying the district lines, produced this map. It was quickly printed in Boston in order to make it available for an upcoming lot auction.

Great Falls of the Potomac, engraved by Thomas Cartwright after George Beck, 1802, aquatint.

Loan, Strathmore Hall Arts Center.

Great Falls, located above Georgetown, was both a natural wonder to newcomers and an important topographical feature. A massive cataract that descended some forty feet over a series of rock ledges, its majesty both inspired artists and prevented upstream navigation. In an effort to reach western markets, early settlers constructed several canals with limited success. This view became one of the most familiar and characteristic of the new Washington City area.

Vue de la ville de Washington en 1800, handcolored engraving.

Loan, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Phelan, Jr.

The new American capital made an attractive international "view," as this French print demonstrates. From a perspective on the far shore of the Potomac, the emerging city sits in an undulation of hills and creeks with a commercial center at Georgetown. The center cluster of buildings is Lear's Wharf, and the first bridge over Rock Creek is visible at the left. In the foreground, hogsheads of tobacco are readied for shipment. The Capitol, on the horizon, has been "completed" by the artist, for in 1800 only a single wing existed.

Map Showing Tracts of Land in Prince George's County, Maryland Conveyed for the Federal City, Priscilla W. McNeil, 1991.

Photoreproduction.

This map, the result of Priscilla W. McNeil's intensive ten year study in early land records, shows the boundaries of the 30 tracts of privately held land within or partially within the new federal city in June 1791. It was usual at the time to name lots, rather than simply number them. Superimposed on it is a map of the city's streets drawn by James Dermott in the 1790s. Note that Washington city's original boundaries were the Anacostia, the Potomac, Rock Creek and present-day Florida Avenue.

DREAMERS

Account of "Benjamin Banneker's Expenses from and to Geo Town...\$60.00," by Andrew Ellicott, surveyor of the District of Columbia, 1791.

Photoreproduction, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Primary evidence of African-American Benjamin Banneker's participation with Andrew Ellicott in surveying the District of Columbia recently came to light among the Jefferson Papers at the Library of Congress. A self-taught amateur astronomer, Banneker was a Maryland neighbor of the Ellicott family and a retired tobacco farmer when selected to join the Potomac River survey group. The free black man demonstrated exceptional skills as a celestial observer and mathematician and proved highly valuable to Ellicott's scientific team. Until his death in 1806, Banneker continued to calculate annual celestial positions, and his commercial almanacs went through several editions in Philadelphia and Virginia.

Copy of a List of Public and Private Sales of Lots, 1791 City of Washington, copied from an original list in the nineteenth century. HSWDC

In 1789 George Walker of Georgetown proposed financing the development of a new federal city by dividing it up into lots and offering them for sale at auction. George Washington adopted the idea which he hoped would allow public improvements at no cost to taxpayers. But sales, both public and private, were disappointingly slow, providing few funds for federal buildings. In 1791, however, Georgetown merchant Robert Peter and developer Samuel Blodget invested in Washington City real estate, as this account shows.

Scales for monetary transactions, owned and used by proprietor Robert Peter as agent of Glassford & Co., Glasgow, Scotland.
Loan, Tudor Place Foundation, Inc.

Money in circulation at the turn of the century was irregular, consisting of considerable foreign coinage, especially from Spain and Portugal. Not readily exchanged at face value for American money, such coins were weighed to determine their equivalency. Georgetown tobacco merchant Robert Peter used these scales to ensure honest trade. Traveler Henry Fearon wrote of 1818 Washington business: "A storekeeper to remedy his want of change promptly divided a note in two with scissors; 'demi-notes' were a common circulating medium and [I have been] previously familiarized with Spanish dollars cut into every variety of size."

Silver spoon, James Galt, c. 1810.

Loan, Galt and Brother Jewellers.

James Galt founded Galt and Brother Jewellers in 1802. They were part of the active, growing commercial life of the city of Washington. In 1827, Mrs. Frances Trollope described Galt's as a "brilliant shop full of trinkets." The firm is the oldest jeweler in Washington.

The Cottage of David Burnes and Its Dining Room Mantel, James Franklin Hood, 1919.
HSWDC

David Burnes, one of the original Maryland proprietors whose 650 acre land holding was located at the mouth of Goose (Tiber) Creek, was particularly uncooperative about ceding land for public use, until George Washington finally forced his hand. This plat shows the location of Burnes's house. It stood near present-day 17th Street, N.W., and Constitution Avenue.

Tobacco box from Gadsby's Tavern, Alexandria, (D.C.), brass, maker unknown, n.d.
Loan, Gadsby's Tavern.

Citizens of the new capital enjoyed tobacco and alcoholic refreshments in more than a dozen taverns in Alexandria, Georgetown, and Washington City. At Gadsby's and other prominent establishments, leading men gathered to eat and drink, discuss, make business and real estate deals, conduct politics, and carouse. Taverns also served as places of lodging, salesrooms, and theaters. Men and women, including George and Martha Washington, attended ceremonies, entertainments and dancing assemblies at Gadsby's.

Townhouses Commissioned by George Washington, by architect William Thornton, c. 1799, pencil on paper, and accompanying letter.
Loan, Albert H. Small.

Sketch of George Washington's Townhouses, by William C. Newton, pencil on paper, c. 1870. HSWDC

Washington demonstrated his personal commitment to the residential and commercial potential of the city by constructing a large, brick, double house on his Capitol Hill lots. William Thornton, architect of the Capitol, was the designer; the houses are depicted here as they appeared about 1870. Mrs. Thornton recorded a visit to the houses under construction in 1800: "Went after dinner to the General's Houses one of which is nearly finished. They are divided so as to let one or two houses."

Letter, Gen. Washington thanking Mrs. Benjamin Dulany of Alexandria for use of "Blueskin," Loan, Captain and Mrs. Bladen Dulany Claggett.

George Washington on "Blueskin," by Nathaniel Currier, c. 1836, hand-colored lithograph. Loan, The Old Print Gallery, Washington, D. C.

Even after the Residence Act of 1790, some hoped the new city would fail and that the federal government could remain in Philadelphia. Supporting his promotional view against the nay-sayers, Washington wrote to commissioner David Stuart in 1792: "There is a current in Philadelphia which sets so strongly against everything that relates to the Federal district, that it is next to impossible to stem it. It is of highest consequence to this Union, and to the Southern States, in particular, that the public buildings in the Federal City...should be pushed with vigor."

Receipt for \$500 purchase of a city lot in the City of Washington, Henry Dearborn, May 1804. HSWDC

Dearborn became the owner of "Lot #3 in Square #757 in the City of Washington for the sum of \$500." (Square 757 is located on Maryland Ave., N. E. between 2nd and 3rd Streets.) Henry Dearborn was Secretary of War in President Thomas Jefferson's cabinet, serving until 1809. Trained in New Hampshire as a physician, he had a distinguished military career in the Revolutionary War and later was a congressman from Maine.

Houses in a Habitable State in the City of Washington, November 1801. HSWDC

The rush to construct dwellings sufficient to house the government hardly met the need by 1801, although a great many efforts were underway. Several significant brick rows, such as the "Six Buildings" and the "Seven Buildings," were completed or under development on Pennsylvania Avenue west of the President's House. Other buildings, both brick and wood frame, dotted the landscape, clustering especially near Georgetown, along the so-called F Street ridge east of the President's House, near the Capitol, at the Navy Yard, and at Greenleaf's Point.

Marcia Burnes Van Ness, Charles Bird King, c. 1820, oil on canvas.
Photoreproduction.

The vivacious and attractive daughter of crusty proprietor David Burnes, Marcia Burnes Van Ness was a leading socialite during the city's earliest years. After her marriage to John Peter Van Ness, Marcia was a staunch supporter of the growing community, widely respected as founder and longtime directress of the Washington Female Orphan Asylum. She and her daughter died in 1832 from infection received while nursing cholera victims in the citywide epidemic. This portrait by Charles Bird King hung at Hillcrest, an outgrowth of the children's home she founded, as recently as 1964; recent efforts to locate the portrait have been unsuccessful.

DREAMERS, PROMOTERS, AND BUILDERS

Enthusiasts of the new capital city had varied visions. Three presidents, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, dreamed of a noble center of government, commerce and culture.

Another group--speculators--hoped to attract capital, construct buildings, sell lots, and convert their real estate investments into personal fortunes. Then there were builders--architects, skilled craftspeople, laborers (slave and free) who hoped for abundant employment in the many construction projects that were sure to take place.

Expectations of Gain

Many Washingtonians hoped to profit from development at the national capital. With the federal government's arrival, land owners expected property values to increase. Several wealthy speculators and investors bought land whose value, they believed, would rise rapidly. President Washington invested in several properties, anticipating a generous return. Workers and artisans migrated to the capital, lured by job opportunities. But, fortune hunters and laborers were disappointed by Washington City's slow growth.

Robert Brent, attributed to William Cranch, c. 1812, oil on canvas. HSWDC

Congress granted Washington City a charter in 1802, providing for a mayor and city council. This is the only known image of the city's first mayor, Robert Brent, who was appointed by President Thomas Jefferson in 1802. He served until 1812. Brent is credited with establishing the first public school and with initiating the city's annual requests to Congress for financial assistance. Beginning in 1820, residents elected the mayor as well as the city council. This form of government ended in 1871 when the District became a territory. The U.S. Congress replaced the territorial status with a commissioner system in 1873. Washington did not have another elected mayor until 1974.

View of the General Post Office in the City of Washington...taken 22d May 1818..., by James Banton, 1818, watercolor. HSWDC

Real estate speculator Samuel Blodget, Jr., built this building, known as "Blodget's Hotel," as a prize in his lottery scheme to help finance the building of the capital. He owned several hundred choice lots in downtown Washington during the 1790s, and appeared likely to become wealthy as the city grew. He overextended himself, however, and went bankrupt. The building, at 8th and E Streets, N.W., was for years the largest privately-owned building in the city. It saw successive service as a theater, post office, and patent office before it burned in 1836. Congress met there briefly in 1814-1815, following the destruction of the Capitol building in the War of 1812.

Wine glass and cellarette owned and used by Pierre L'Enfant
Loan, LeRoy Tuttle Morgan

Descended in the Carroll-Digges-Morgan family of Maryland, this wine glass and accompanying liquor cabinet are reputed in family lore to have been used by L'Enfant on his deathbed. Dismissed as designer of the federal city in 1792 after repeated difficulties with his employers, L'Enfant spent his last days at Green Hill (now Chillum), Maryland, supported by the Digges family. In 1825, he died and was buried there. In the early twentieth century his remains were removed to Arlington National Cemetery, overlooking the city of Washington.

Description of the City of Washington, Northern Budget, August 6, 1800, published in Troy, New York. HSWDC

Although this article claims to be a letter from "an English gentleman, settled [in Washington], to a friend in England, "the effusive praise suggests the promotional statements frequently "planted" in the national press during city's early years. Newspapers were anxious for interesting copy and the City of Washington needed settlers. Whether or not written by an immigrant Englishman, the description captures some of the delights of Washington, then and now--river views, rolling hills, birds, and lush vegetation.

Business account, drawn on Adam King and Company, Alexandria, Virginia, 1806. HSWDC

Adam King, a successful hardware merchant, operated out of Alexandria, a major port of entry for manufactured goods. The federal government was a catalyst for diverse business enterprises in the city under construction, and hardware was a major item of trade. Merchants and tradesmen represented a large percentage of the business in early Washington, and local building industry was a primary source of their income.

Federal City Lottery ticket, signed by proprietor Samuel Blodget

Washington City Canal Lottery tickets, signed by proprietors Daniel Carroll of Duddington and Notley Young; Washington Canal Lottery ticket June 1820. All, HSWDC

Entrepreneurs created a variety of lottery schemes, hoping to create funds for public improvements. They lured purchasers with prizes, such as Blodget's grand hotel. The Washington Canal, running north from the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River) to the Capitol and then west along present-day Constitution Avenue was a favorite cause. The lotteries were unsuccessful as fund-raising mechanisms and their use finally died out.

Financial Failures

The founders planned to construct buildings to house Congress and the President without cost to the government. Sales of land acquired by the government would provide the funds for elegant structures to symbolize the new nation. But sales were slow and lot prices low. Even sales to financiers and land speculators failed to produce significant revenues when the wealthy investors went bankrupt. Construction of the Capitol and President's House fell behind schedule, and the buildings remained incomplete when the government moved to Washington in 1800.

PLACES AND PATTERNS

At first, residents of the new capital clustered in distinct settlements separated by open spaces: Georgetown on the city's western edge; a concentration of executive branch officials near the President's House; a Center Market halfway between the President's House and the Capitol; a village close by the Capitol housing members of Congress, their clerks and support facilities; and a community of naval craftsman and their families near the Navy Yard, southeast of the Capitol. South of Washington City lay Alexandria, like Georgetown a separate and well established city but now part of the District of Columbia. Most residents were natives of Virginia and Maryland; 25% were African Americans, a significant number of whom were free persons.

Old Market & City Hall, Alexandria, Va., pencil on paper.

Loan, Chevy Chase Savings Bank, FSB

During the 1790s, the City of Alexandria experienced considerable commercial growth and boasted a well-stocked marketplace. Albert Gallatin, newly-appointed Secretary of the Treasury, wrote his wife in 1801 from his Washington boarding house that one should shop the Alexandria markets in order to find appealing fruits and vegetables. Fishmongers and confectioners also flourished in Alexandria. During the following decade, lettuce, strawberries, tomatoes, and eggplants were available in Washington proper, along with cakes, candies, and sweetmeats of every description.

Rock Creek Church, by C. Hinrichs, c. 1859, watercolor. HSWDC

Considered the oldest parish in the District of Columbia, the Rock Creek congregation began as an Episcopal mission in 1716. A frame chapel was constructed on a one-hundred-acre glebe (a revenue-producing tract) donated by Maryland tobacco planter, John Bradford. The brick church was erected in 1775 and, with modifications, it continues to serve the congregation today. During the nineteenth century, the surrounding glebe was developed as Rock Creek Cemetery.

Daniel Carroll's Tobacco Barn Serving as the First Home of Christ Episcopal Church, by E. P. Cranch, c. 1828, charcoal on paper. HSWDC

According to Margaret Bayard Smith's recollections of 1800, "the only place for public worship in our new-city was a very small, frame building at the bottom of Capitol-hill. It had been a tobacco-house belonging to Daniel Carroll and was purchased by a few Episcopalians for a mere trifle and fitted up as a church in the plainest and rudest manner. During the first winter, Mr. Jefferson regularly attended service on the sabbath-day in the humble church." A permanent church, still in use today, was built in 1806 at 620 G Street, Southeast.

Letter, John Mason to Thomas Clothworthy of Taneytown, Maryland, 24 April, 1814.
A Chorographical and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia, 1816. All, HSWDC

John Mason, son of George Mason of Gunston Hall, settled on Analostan Island (today Roosevelt Island) where he experimented with sheep-raising. As the old tobacco culture of the Potomac Valley disappeared, agriculturists increasingly sought new areas of engagement. Sheep-raising was then in fashion and European animals were imported to strengthen American stock. Mason was so confident of success that he stated in his letter to Thomas Clothworthy, "It gives me great pleasure to hear you are coming into the true faith on the subject of sheep."

Old Yarrow, by James Alexander Simpson, c. 1822, oil on canvas.
Loan, District of Columbia Public Library, Peabody Room, Georgetown Regional Branch.

An elderly black man who had been brought as a slave in his youth from Africa to the American colonies, Yarrow Mamout was a well-known figure in early day Washington. He was granted his freedom on May 1, 1807, and went on to become one of the first shareholders in the Columbia Bank. By the time of this portrait, Yarrow owned a house and had an active business making and selling wooden bowls and trays. Yarrow Mamout was one of a growing number of free African-Americans who began to build a strong black community with businesses, churches and schools in the antebellum period.

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Manumission, granting freedom from bondage to "my negro man, Rhodam," signed by Hector Sanford of Georgetown, December 1802. HSWDC

In 1800, some 3,200 black residents of the territory of Columbia were held in slavery and 783 were listed as "free negroes," while the white population stood at 14,093. Enslaved African-Americans provided much of the labor, skilled and unskilled, used to build the new city, assisting with the construction of the Capitol, White House, and other public buildings. Manumission, the granting of freedom, while unusual, was the most likely road to freedom. A free black person was required to carry "free papers" at all times and to follow other special rules governing behavior and movements. By 1830, a majority of African-Americans were free.

Sidewalk brick, stamped "Alexandria, D.C."

Loan, private collection.

George Washington requested special legislation to include Alexandria within the 10-mile-square limits of the District of Columbia. But, increasingly dissatisfied with their lack of commercial success as members of the District, Alexandrians in 1846 persuaded the U. S. Congress to retrocede all of the District south of the Potomac River to Virginia.

Fragments of bricks from Rhodes Tavern, retrieved during demolition.

Loan, private collection.

Built around 1800 at 15th and F Streets, Northwest, Rhodes Tavern played an important role in the early capital. Between 1801 and 1815, it served as a site of civic meetings, a polling place, a hotel, a boarding house, and a bank. In the 1970s and 1980s, the battle to save Rhodes Tavern was Washington's most bitter struggle over historic preservation. The tavern was finally lost to commercial development in September 1984.

Fifty Years in Chains: or, the Life of an American Slave, by Charles Ball, 1858.

Loan, Special Collections, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, The Johns Hopkins University.

In 1808, at the age of 20, Charles Ball was hired out by his master as a cook on a Navy frigate stationed at the Navy Yard. Ball's memoirs describe the black community in Washington. The Navy Yard offered employment opportunities for free African-Americans: ship caulkers, seamen, rope makers. By the outbreak of the Civil War, the greatest concentration of black homeowners was in the southeast section along 4th Street between the Navy Yard and East Capitol Street.

HUMILIATION AND REBIRTH

Washington was nearly a quarter of a century old when the city experienced a crisis that almost destroyed it. During the war of 1812, after British forces invaded Maryland, redcoats marched easily into the capital in 1814, burning to the ground the President's House, the Capitol, and other federal buildings.

This disaster set off a drive to remove the national capital to another location where the government might be safe from invasion. Collaboration between local citizens, Washington bankers, and President James Madison assured rebuilding the federal establishment and brought the national capital back to life.

View of the Capitol of the United States after the Conflagration in 1814, drawn by Alexander Rider, engraved by Alexander Lawson, c. 1815. HSWDC

British Admiral George Cockburn and his troops marched through the halls of the partially constructed U.S. Capitol on August 24, 1814, setting fire to whatever would burn. Furnishings piled high in the center of both chambers fueled the flames. A providential rainfall quelled the conflagration, leaving the exterior walls blackened and scarred, the interiors thoroughly gutted. Although the building had been under construction for some twenty-two years when war came, it was far from complete and some congressmen questioned the value of rebuilding. But the majority remained loyal to George Washington's vision for the new city and authorized President Madison to borrow \$500,000 to rebuild the Capitol and other federal structures damaged by the British.

Johnny Bull and the Alexandrians, drawn and etched by William Charles, c. 1812. Loan, The Lyceum, City of Alexandria.

British caricaturist William Charles lived and worked in the United States between 1805 and his death in 1820. At print shops in New York and Philadelphia, he produced nearly two dozen caricatures satirizing political issues relating to the War of 1812. This image chides Alexandrians for being all too willing to hand over their rum and tobacco in exchange for easy treatment at the hands of British occupying forces.

Map of Major Gen. Ross's route, with the British Column, from Benedict, on the Patuxent River, to the City of Washington, August 1814, engraved by William James, 1818.

Loan, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Phelan, Jr.

The British land force, led by Major General Ross, attacked the cities of Bladensburg and Washington. American forces, under the command of General William Winder and Major John Armstrong, challenged the British at Bladensburg. After a brief encounter the Americans beat a hasty retreat.

Joseph Gales, by Samuel F. B. Morse, c. 1822, oil on canvas.

Loan, Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Joseph Gales, Jr. was Washington's leading journalist of government news for almost fifty years. He joined the *National Intelligencer* newspaper in 1807, and became its co-owner with William W. Seaton. He was the sole reporter of daily events at the U.S. Senate until 1820. Seaton and Gales also printed the forerunner of today's *Congressional Record* and other publications documenting the early Congress. Gales served as mayor of the city from 1827 to 1830 and retained a leading role in Washington journalism until his death in 1860. *St. John's Church notice*, 1815.

Loan, St. John's Church, Lafayette Square.

Announcing the laying of the cornerstone for St. John's Church in 1815, this manuscript text for an "advertisement" to be published in the *National Intelligencer*, reflects the confidence many felt in the city's future. St. John's Church, located across Lafayette Square from the White House, is one of Benjamin Latrobe's most successful and enduring buildings.

View of the Capitol, about 1827, following reconstruction, wood engraving, printed in gouache.

Loan, private collection.

Reconstruction of the Capitol was essential to Washington's rebirth, and was a triumph for the city's supporters. Charles Bulfinch designed and built the low dome during his term as architect between 1819 and 1827. Completion of the Capitol and its dome represented for Washingtonians--and Americans--renewed faith in their capital city and in the future of their democratic government.

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The Historical Society of Washington, D. C.

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The Historical Society of Washington, D. C. collects, preserves, and teaches the local history of the nation's capital. Founded in 1894 as the Columbia Historical Society, HSW today maintains a major research library of Washingtoniana, publishes Washington History magazine, and offers an array of public programs related to the city's history including lectures, courses, workshops, tours and exhibitions. The Society's headquarters building is the Christian Heurich Mansion at 1307 New Hampshire Avenue, N. W., a late Victorian landmark which the Society operates as a house museum. For more information about programs and membership call The Historical Society of Washington, D. C. at 202-785-2068.